The Seen to Seated Method

FREE GUIDE

Speed is Key

Win the patient by responding first: a practical guide for UK private clinics.

For UK private healthcare clinics.

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A note from the founder

As a clinic owner, your working day often stretches well beyond opening hours. Your team need time off too, so reception may only be staffed from 8am to 6pm on weekdays, just when many prospective patients are busy at work themselves. By the time they have a moment to get in touch, your clinic may be closed.

I'm sure your reception team are amazing. They answer the phone when they can, but they also have to juggle providing great customer service to the patients in the waiting room. Once a call is answered, they're great on the phone. But what happens on a Tuesday at 8pm, once a prospective patient is browsing a few clinics in the area after putting the kids to bed? What happens on a Sunday morning, when they're watching videos on what the treatment involves and have finally plucked up the courage to enquire?

Do you make them wait until the first receptionist is available (and not busy opening up) the next working day? I've been there, and I must admit I'm guilty of getting annoyed having to wait.

Ten years ago, waiting was normal. But now we live in an age where everything is immediate: people expect things now, or never. Time is a precious commodity, and by the time your team call them back, they are at work themselves, or have booked elsewhere.

Do you need to hire an out-of-hours team offshore? Perhaps you've considered it.

What's important to remember is that customer service starts before someone sees you in clinic. It starts from the moment a prospective patient decides to contact you. Being able to handle enquiries, even provide basic information, book someone in or promise a callback puts you miles ahead of so many other practices still living in 2016.

Take a look at this guide for hints and tips, and in the meantime, if I can help personally, reach out.

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Why speed matters

When someone enquires about a private treatment or appointment, they are often contacting more than one clinic at the same time. The clinic that replies quickly, answers the question clearly and offers an easy next step is often the one that gets the booking.

1 Set response-time targets your team can actually hit

"As fast as possible" is not a target. Agree specific standards for each channel and write them down, so everyone knows what good looks like.

- **Phone calls in opening hours:** answered live wherever possible, with a clear plan for when every line is busy.
- **Website forms, emails and social messages:** a personal reply within a set window during opening hours, such as within the hour.
- **Out-of-hours enquiries:** an immediate acknowledgement, then a personal reply first thing on the next working day.
- **High-intent enquiries first:** someone asking about a specific treatment, a course of sessions or an appointment this week goes to the top of the list.

Pick targets that suit your team and your enquiry volume, then review them monthly. **A realistic target that is met every day beats an ambitious one that is quietly ignored.**

2 Decide who answers what

Slow replies often come from uncertainty rather than workload. A message sits unanswered because nobody is sure whose job it is, or whether they are allowed to give a price.

Name an owner for each channel at each time of day, including lunch cover and holidays.

Write approved answers for common questions: prices or price ranges, finance options, what happens at a first appointment, parking and access.

Agree what the front desk can answer and what must go to a clinician, so clinical questions are handed over rather than guessed at.

Keep one shared place where every new enquiry is logged, so nothing relies on someone's memory.

Keep replies within the rules

Approved answers should be accurate, should not promise results and should match what your clinicians would say. Stay within the CAP Code and the guidance of your own professional or regulatory body, such as the GDC, GMC, NMC, GOsC, GCC, HCPC, GPhC or GOC. If someone asks about a prescription-only treatment, offer a consultation rather than promoting the medicine.

3 Cover evenings, weekends and busy periods

Many people research treatments in the evening or at weekends, when the clinic is closed. Others ring at the busiest moments of the day, when the front desk is with patients.

- Make sure every out-of-hours enquiry receives a prompt, friendly acknowledgement that explains what happens next.
- Offer a way to book a consultation or request a callback at any time, so interest is captured while it is fresh.
- Keep urgent and clinical advice routes clear and separate, following your existing out-of-hours arrangements.

Consider a Virtual AI receptionist

Set it up with your approved clinic information, to answer common questions and capture details when your team can't pick up. Make clear to callers that they are speaking to a virtual assistant, keep it away from clinical advice, and cover it in your privacy notice.

4 Use a missed-call text back

A missed call is often a lost enquiry, because many callers won't leave a voicemail. A short, automatic text sent shortly after a missed call keeps the conversation going.

EXAMPLE MESSAGE

> Hi, it's [Colleague name] from [Clinic name]. Sorry we missed your call. How can we help? Reply here or book a time that suits you: [link]. If you'd like a callback, reply with a good time to reach you and let us know if we should use a different number. Speak soon.

Keep the message helpful rather than promotional, make sure it identifies the clinic, and check that your phone system and texting tool handle the caller's details in line with your privacy notice.

5 Follow up with a clear stopping point

Someone who hasn't replied may still be interested. They might be busy, have missed your message or need a little more information before booking.

- Set a simple follow-up sequence so enquiries aren't forgotten.
- Keep messages short, personal and helpful, with an easy next step.
- Leave a sensible gap between messages and use channels you're allowed to contact them through.
- Stop following up when someone books, declines or asks you to stop.

Record why enquiries didn't book, as these reasons help you improve your answers.

6 Make booking the easy option

- Offer two or three specific appointment times rather than asking "when suits you?".
- Where your diary allows it, send a link so patients can book themselves.
- Confirm every booking in writing with the date, time, location, what to bring and any consultation fee.
- Send reminders before the appointment to help reduce no-shows.

7 Track what happens to every enquiry

You can't improve what you don't measure. A simple weekly review is enough to start.

- Number of new enquiries, by channel and by treatment or service.
- How quickly each was answered, against your targets.
- What days and times the calls came in.
- How many became appointments, and how many of those went ahead.
- Missed calls, and how many were recovered.
- Reasons enquiries didn't book.

Share the results with the team, celebrate improvements and fix the gaps one at a time. Once fixed, measure again and compare with your starting point to see how many more enquiries and patients were booked in as a result of the change.

Your one-page action checklist

Work through these steps in order. Each one is small on its own; together they make sure no enquiry slips through the cracks.

- [ ] Written response-time targets agreed for phone, web forms, email and social messages.
- [ ] A named owner for every channel, including cover for breaks, lunch and holidays.
- [ ] Approved answers written for prices, payment options, first appointments, parking and access.
- [ ] Clear rules on what the front desk answers and what goes to a clinician.
- [ ] Approved answers checked against the CAP Code and your own regulator's guidance.
- [ ] One shared log where every new enquiry is recorded.
- [ ] An out-of-hours acknowledgement and a way to book or request a callback at any time.
- [ ] Missed-call text back switched on and tested.
- [ ] A follow-up sequence that stops when someone books, declines or opts out.
- [ ] Written booking confirmations and appointment reminders in place.
- [ ] A weekly review of enquiries, response times, bookings and reasons for not booking.
- [ ] Measure, measure, measure: before and after each change, to see what works.

Tip: print this page, tick each box as it is done, and review it with your team every month.

THE SEEN TO SEATED METHOD

Want help putting this in place?

Book a free 30-minute clinic clarity session. We'll talk through where your clinic is now, where you want it to be and the steps worth taking next. You'll leave with three practical next steps, whether we work together or not.

Attract

Marketing that brings the right new patients to your clinic.

Respond

24/7 enquiry handling, including an AI receptionist to handle routine enquiries and pass clinical questions to your team.

Convert

Follow-up and booking systems that turn interest into appointments.

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Book your free session: calendly.com/katie-honeychurch/demo

Email us: hello@seentoseated.com

The Seen to Seated Method

Helping UK private clinics turn enquiries into booked, attended appointments.

This guide is general information for private healthcare clinics. It is not legal, regulatory or clinical advice. Always check your plans against the rules that apply to your clinic and your profession.